

This is a handout provided by the California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division at the October 29, 2012, Child Nutrition Advisory Council meeting.

Provide Water With Meals for Young Children



To promote good health and to establish positive lifelong nutrition habits, it is recommended that water be provided to young children between and during meals and snacks.

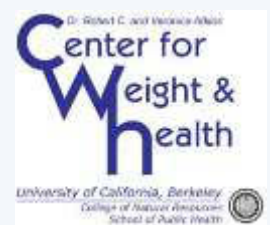
Beginning in 2012, a new law in California requires that all licensed childcare facilities provide drinking water to children at all times during the day. The intent of the law is to ensure that children have easy access to a calorie-free healthy beverage (water) in order to help reduce chronic conditions such as obesity and dental cavities.

Some childcare providers have voiced concerns that if children are provided water with meals, they will fill up on the water and not consume enough milk or other healthy foods.

However, a recent review of related research indicates that this is not the case: normal water consumption with meals does NOT displace other healthy beverages and foods.¹

The following are recommendations to childcare providers that promote children's health and prevent obesity:²

- 1) Make plain water (preferably tap water without any additions) easily available to children throughout the day, both indoors and outside, in age-appropriate-sized cups or reusable water bottles or by self-serve.
- 2) Provide water along with other healthy beverages (milk or no more than one serving per day of 100% juice in age-appropriate portions) at meals and snacks.
- 3) Do not allow sugar-sweetened beverages such as sodas, fruit-flavored drinks, flavored milks or diet drinks at any time.
- 4) Child care providers should themselves follow, and thereby model, these healthy beverage practices when with children.
- 5) Information on the health and nutrition benefits of water should be provided to childcare providers, parents and children.



1) Ritchie L, Rausa J, Patel A, Braff-Guajardo E, Hecht K. Providing Water With Meals is Not a Concern for Young Children: Summary of the Literature & Best Practice Recommendations. May 2012.

2) For more information visit: Atkins Center for Weight and Health website (cwh.berkeley.edu) and California Food Policy Advocates' Healthy Beverages in Childcare website (www.healthybeveragesinchildcare.org).